



# Notes for Water Watchers

Kansas Department of Health and Environment

December, 1993 (Revised October, 1997)

## Water Quality Protection from Spills

### What are spills?

A spill is an accidental release of pollutants into the environment. Spills of toxics and hazardous substances demand immediate attention. Spills of non-toxic or non-hazardous materials can also cause environmental damage, and need attention, as well.

Some spills contain unknown substances, which are those in unlabeled or unmarked containers. Spills may contain hazardous materials, including those which are flammable or highly toxic. Contact trained professionals to respond to these spills. These professionals are able to evacuate, contain, and use the proper clean-up procedures in response to the spills.

This type of spill is called the *professional response spill*, and is considered to be the biggest spill-related threat to public health and safety. Because of this, it should be reported first over all other types of spills. Report this type of spill immediately to the County Coordinator of the Kansas Division of Emergency Preparedness, the Kansas Department of Health and Environment Bureau of Environmental Remediation (KDHE-BER) Spill Response Unit, or other emergency personnel.

Some spills have known substances and volumes with label directions to follow. These can be responded to by most untrained individuals. Also, spills of small volumes of non-hazardous or low human-toxicity substances can be handled by untrained individuals. These spills are referred to as *personal response spills*.

Even though these spills can be managed by untrained individuals, the spill may involve a close water source. In this case, temporary containment practices are required to prevent further spreading of the spill. If you detect a spill, you should begin containment procedures before reporting the spill.

Recommended pollution control practices for personal response spills are: Re-containerizing and recycling, temporary dike or berm construction, use of an absorbent, such as kitty litter, and reporting the spill.

### What are some ways to control, contain, and clean-up a spill?

Pesticide spills have been recorded across the country. Here are some of the ways to control, contain, and clean-up pesticide spills.

#### Control

- ◆ Identify the source and temporarily plug the hole, if possible.
- ◆ Isolate the area by keeping animals and people at least 30 feet away.
- ◆ Call for help.

## **Contain**

- ◆ Stop the spread by building a dam or soil around the spill.
- ◆ Dig a sump and pump out the liquid that flows into the hole, if the pesticides are liquid. Then spread absorbent material over the rest of the spill.
- ◆ Never hose down a spill! This only spreads the pesticide.

## **Clean-up**

- ◆ Continue to add absorbent material until no free liquid remains. Then shovel the contaminated material into a leak-proof container.
- ◆ Dispose of the contaminated material at a KDHE Bureau of Waste Management approved site.
- ◆ Report the spill as soon as possible to the local police or sheriff.
- ◆ Report major spills to the National Response Center or EPA.
- ◆ If in doubt, report the spill!

## **How can I prevent costly clean-up of the spills?**

Clean-up can be financially and environmentally-costly. Preventing the spills is the best way to cover these costly clean-ups. As mentioned, there are many ways to control, contain, and clean-up spills. Some measures you can take during everyday activities are: always check for leaks; avoid overfilling; lock up chemicals, if possible; drive defensively; and remember what you're using or transporting.

To report a spill, contact KDHE-BER at (913) 296-1660 from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. During non-working hours, call (913) 296-1503. Several 24-hour phone numbers are available: the Kansas Division of Emergency Preparedness, (913) 296-3176; the US Environmental Protection Agency, (913) 236-3778; and the National Spill Response Center, 1-800-424-8802.

For information about chemical contents of spill materials, contact Chemtrec at 1-800-424-9300. For technical information and health effects of spill materials, contact the Centers for Disease Control at (404) 639-0615.

For a copy of the Spill Report Packet, contact KDHE-BER, Forbes Field, Bldg. 740, Topeka, KS 66620-0001; (785) 296-1660.